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September 25, 2002

The Honorable Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Supervisor, Third District
821 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S BUDGET RESTORATION

Dear Chairman Yaroslavsky:

On Tuesday, October 1, 2002 your Board will have an opportunity to restore funding to the District Attorney's departmental budget. A motion for restoration of nearly \$5 million dollars has been pending action by your Board since the budget deliberations in June of this year.

I urgently request you to approve the restoration of funding which was not part of the CAO's recommended budget for 2002-2003.

Due to increasing system costs associated with the workers compensation program and other employee benefit costs the CAO once again asked this Department to make the untenable choice of program reductions or an increase in the salary savings requirement.

Either choice eliminates some of this Department's general fund positions, due to erosion of the budget for salaries.

As you are well aware, the salary savings requirement for this Department is already at the astonishing level of 13.38% of salaries.

Reluctantly, this Department has elected to reduce positions as a means of balancing the proposed budget. We have appealed to your Board for relief.

This matter is now before you and on your agenda for Tuesday, October 1.

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Approximately 29 attorney positions and 8 investigator positions are at stake in this pending matter.

I have preliminarily identified the Sex Crimes Division, the Elder Abuse Section and the Environmental Crimes Division as the probable areas to be cut if your Board does not vote to restore the funding.

This Department does not have the flexibility to curtail positions from revenue offset grant funded programs. Basic line operations in the various courthouses throughout the county are already at minimum levels of service. This Department's only alternative is to eliminate long-respected specialized vertical prosecution programs that are funded by general County revenues.

The Sex Crimes Division reviews, investigates, and screens nearly 1,400 sexual assault and child molestation cases each year presented by various police agencies in Los Angeles County. Each case represents at least one woman or child victimized by an abuser. A significant number of these cases are filed and prosecuted each year.

Major cases such as those involving allegations of sexual abuse by clergy are currently being reviewed. They are being centrally coordinated through the District Attorney's Sex Crimes Division. This capability must not be diminished.

The Environmental Crimes Division carries an average of 60 cases at any point in time. These are very complex legal matters involving alleged cases of industrial/manufacturing pollution, and other environmental regulatory issues. Many State, local and County agencies that monitor and regulate environmental matters depend heavily on this Department's Environmental Crimes Division for enforcement power and the litigation support to prosecute willful offenders and to enforce fines and penalties. Without this enforcement effort, the County's environmental protection capability would be seriously harmed.

Although we have been successful in regaining the funds for one Elder Abuse position earlier identified as a curtailment, there are three other The positions whose fate rests with your Board in the motion pending on October 1.

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The Elder Abuse Section provides expert assistance to police agencies Countywide in the protection of the elderly from physical abuse and financial fraud by relatives, family associates, and caretakers. This is a widespread social problem. The threat of prosecution of offenders is the only way to deter this type of reprehensible conduct toward senior citizens.

The Elder Abuse Section is a critical aspect of our Department's specialized prosecutions program. It would be immediately missed by the law enforcement community.

I have consistently pointed out the critical funding flaw that exists in the overly aggressive and unrealistic salary savings factor.

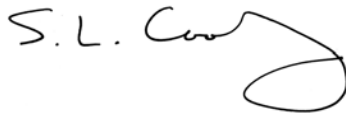
Your urgent attention to this Department's 2002-2003 budget restoration request is solicited at this time. The motion before your Board on Tuesday, October 1, 2002 deserves an affirmative response.

This Department has worked with very difficult financial constraints and stayed within the terms of set budget parameters. Our budget has been responsibly and faithfully administered. Departments that do so deserve favorable consideration of reasonable requests.

Your support for restoration of this Department's \$5 million dollar budget cut is respectfully requested. Development of a three-year plan to reduce the salary savings factor to a realistic requirement would be greatly appreciated and would be a sound budgetary decision.

My staff and I are available to discuss the various points of this letter at any time.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. L. Cooley", followed by a large, stylized circular flourish.

STEVE COOLEY
District Attorney

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c: David E. Janssen, CAO
Chief Administrative Officer